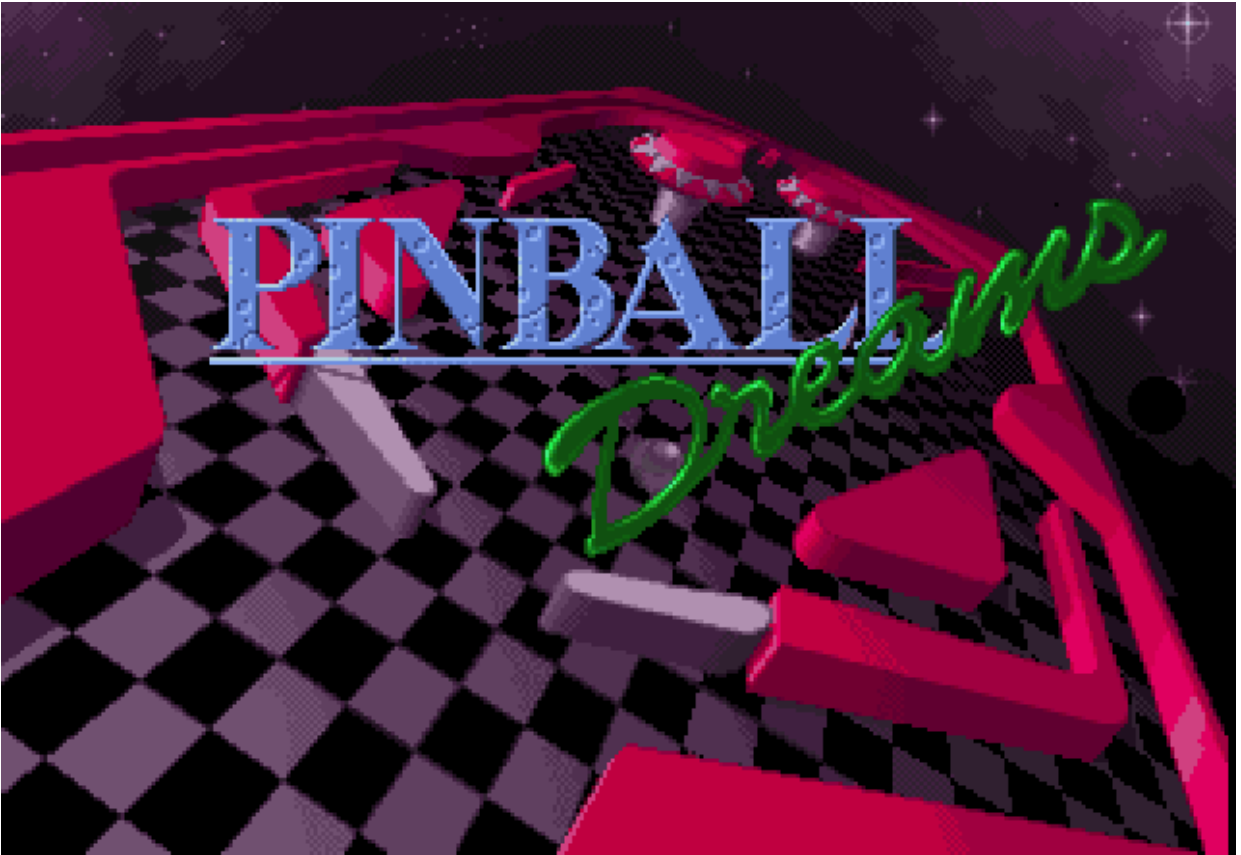


The Games that Weren't Article that Wasn't

Written by dreamkatcha. Any related videos, as always, can be found on my YouTube channel.

None of this would have been possible without the fantastic resources generously provided by immensely talented emulator authors, and communities such as Hall of Light, Lemon Amiga, Lemon 64, World of Spectrum, Moby Games, World of Longplays and Recorded Amiga Games. Thank you for your tireless dedication to preserving the history of gaming.

Emerging from the demo scene as 'The Silents', Swedish developers Digital Illusions left their stamp on the Amiga world in spectacular fashion with the release of Pinball Illusions and Pinball Fantasies. Switching their focus back to a project originally conceived in 1991, we were introduced to a little known run and gun shooter called Hardcore.





It was pegged as a kind of slick Super Turricanoid, hi-tech blaster, seamlessly blending platforming stages with SWIV-esque jeep combat; understandably, the gaming press were chomping at the bit to sink their teeth into it. Hardcore was enthusiastically previewed in Amiga Power in May 1993, CU Amiga in May 1994, and *twice* in The One, first in March 1993 and then followed up with an in-depth analysis in the May 1994 issue.



The auspicious Amiga/Mega Drive title was intended for release in September 1994, and was to be published by Psygnosis. *Intended* being the operative word - sadly the project ran aground and was unceremoniously relegated to the 'Games that Weren't league. This late in the day, and with both platforms almost running on empty, Psygnosis pulled the plug, simultaneously cancelling another 13 proposed WIPs in one fell swoop. Amongst them were the

Mega Drive versions of Shadow of the Beast III, ResQ, Prince of Persia 2, Bill's Tomato Game, and Blood Money.

Regretfully, and with the project 99% complete, Hardcore was abandoned to the mists of time. Nevertheless, the developers regrouped to release Benefactor in the same year and through the same publisher. The enhanced CD32 version of Pinball Illusions would be the last game they released for the Amiga before leaving the scene in 1995 for pastures new.

Hardcore's three key contributors went on to develop games for the next generation systems including the PlayStation, SEGA Saturn and PC.

Coder Staffan Langin dedicated his time to True Pinball, Motorhead and Nascar Heat.

Joakim Wejdemar lent his artistic skills to Swedish Touring Car Championship, Rally Masters, S-40 Racing, Motorhead, and True Pinball.

Olaf Gustaffsson continued to compose game music and sound effects for contemporary platforms, switching his attention to Swedish Touring Car Championship, Motorhead, S40 Racing, and True Pinball.



Fast forward sixteen years to 2010, at 'last-ditch attempt to revive lost project' o'clock, the co-founders of Digital Illusions, Andreas Axelsson and Olof Gustafsson, set about making up for lost time.

Using an Xbox to demonstrate, the duo proudly showcased footage of the promising game at the Datastorm 2010 demo party in Gothenberg to a crowd of captivated retro gamers. The masterplan was to approach Sony, who acquired Psygnosis in 1993 and therefore own the rights to the Hardcore IP, and request permission to squish the last bug and finally release the game.

Another six years passed by with apparently no progress having been made. It didn't help matters in the least when the Japanese conglomerate chose to wind up Sony Studio Liverpool (formerly Psygnosis) in August 2012, leaving the shelved product in limbo once more.

On a roll I thought it would be a prime candidate for another 'Games that Weren't' article so contacted Staffan (who has been the Chairman/CEO of EPOS Game Studios for the past eleven and a half years) to establish the current status of his

much-loved Metroid beater. It's not good news I'm afraid, folks...

"Even though I programmed the game, I unfortunately don't have any of the source code left nor any assets. They probably exist deep in the archives of Dice, but I'm not 100% sure about that.

As far as I know, Dice has no interest in reviving the game. At one point, about 15 years ago, Ericsson was working on a handheld gaming device, which later was canned, and Hardcore was considered to be ported to that device. It never got any further than to the very early planning stage and no work on the actual game was undertaken.

Sorry for not being of any real help to you with your "Games that Weren't" article and I wish you good luck with it!

Best regards,

Staffan Langin"



Nice of him to put me in the picture and satisfy my curiosity of course, but sadly it's a case of dead-end meets blind alley in no man's limbo-land. A highly anticipated game consigned to push up daisies on Boot Hill, and most likely for convoluted judicial reasons beyond the control of DICE.

The handheld device referred to is the 'Red Jade', engineered by DICE co-founder and former CEO, Fredrik Lilegren and Jasper Karrbrink. It was to be a kind of games console/PDA/multimedia phone hybrid long before smartphones stuck their flag in that marketing mountain. The 3D, PlayStation-quality games were to be delivered digitally and cost around \$20, the 64-bit unit itself retailing for \$150.

One innovative - for the time - advantage it sought to offer was wireless connectivity to enable multiplayer interaction over Bluetooth. By no means least, with RJ Mical (legendary co-creator of the Amiga 1000 as if you didn't already know!) on board as 'vice president of software engineering', it stood an excellent chance of being the Game Boy Advance trasher the media speculated it to be.

The concept was pitched to SEGA and Sony, who both dismissed it, claiming they weren't interested in the handheld arena. SEGA had clearly forgotten the not-to-be-sniffed-at level of Game Gear sales they amassed in 1991 (10.62m units up to March 1996 compared with the combined sales figure of 118.69m for the Game Boy and Game Boy Colour), and Sony forging ahead to release the PSP in 2004 to critical acclaim (worldwide sales amounted to 82m as of November 2013).

Instead, Swedish networking and telecommunications equipment and services specialist, Eriksson, stepped up to the plate promising to invest \$500m in the project with a

view to out-manoeuvring their most notable competitor, Nokia.

Having already sunk \$10m into research and development, a fire broke out in a New Mexico Philips chip factory in March 2000 causing Ericsson's phone production process to spiral into disarray. That year their phone handset division filed a loss of SEK 24m and they were forced to issue a profit warning in March 2001. By 2003 Ericsson had shed a total of 53,000 employees, and in order to stay afloat in between entered into a joint venture with Sony, forming Sony Ericsson Mobile Communications.

Clearly, long before late 2001 - Red Jade's ETA - the ailing company was in no position to fulfil its pledge to continue supporting the project, and thus backed out leaving Fredrik and Jasper high and dry. Without a working prototype to demonstrate, previously enthusiastic publishers reached for their barge poles, and Red Jade was pronounced dead on arrival in April 2001.

Post-Red Jade, RJ Mical joined Fathammer Ltd becoming their chief architect. Fathammer were to develop titles for the worst-selling handheld games system in the known universe, the Gizmondo, when it was known as the Gametrac. Despite being considered cutting edge for its time, the device failed for a number of reasons unrelated to its design; the financial irregularities and extravagant spending of the managing company - Tiger Telematics - and its association with Stefan Eriksson, the leader of the Uppsala mafia, being three of the principal ones.

So just to recap as this is getting complicated (and off-topic), what we're dealing with here is a failed attempt to resuscitate a Red Jade 'Game that Wasn't' based on a Mega Drive 'Game that Wasn't' that emanated from an Amiga 'Game that Wasn't'.

If there was a trophy for the winners of an 'unluckiest developers in the business' contest, it would, without a shadow of a doubt be awarded to Digital Illusions!